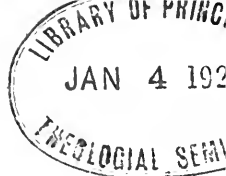


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Christian Thought Oct. 1893



THE BIBLE AND HIGHER CRITICISM.

[Read at the Summer School of the American Institute of Christian Philosophy, July 6, 1893.]

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BY PROF. HOWARD OSGOOD, D.D., LL.D.,
Of the Rochester Theological Seminary.

THE wail of man wherever found, the heart-cry that follows the evening sun around the world, the testimony of every religion, is that man is a guilty sinner and needs salvation from himself by an omnipotent and gracious hand. The Lama's prayer wheel, the Chinese temple, the Indian pilgrimages, the African fetish, the crowded spires of Europe and America, all bear branded on them the one prayer, "Save us from our sins." Listen to the accusing cry of man against man, of nation against nation, of church against church, of party against party, of newspaper against newspaper. From the garden of Eden, from the Egyptian book of the dead rising up from the horizon of earliest monumental history of man, from the earliest hymns of the Babylonians, from all the historians and poets of man's greatest deeds and deepest wants, from the blood of Abel to the blood of Christ, through all the forms of man's inhumanity to man, the sin of man is stamped wherever the foot of man has trod. The best and wisest men have most deeply known and told this fact.

Into the midst of a world burdened with sin and longing for peace and rest, the Bible comes with a very practical claim and test of its being the Word of the only God: that it alone reveals the true character of sin and the way of salvation from sin to peace of heart and holiness of life. Man, Christian and heathen, has invented a thousand ways to escape his sin, but not one of them leads to peace and holiness. Is it possible to put this claim of the Bible to a clear test? Can it change the heart of the worst of men and spread from heart to heart until a whole people is turned from every evil and misery which the heart of man can invent to the love and worship of God, to purity, peace, holiness, and a well ordered state?

Now it is just at this day when the Bible in certain learned circles is denied as a revelation, as the Word of the living God, that we are able to show this test in the clearest possible light. It is in this day when the inheritance of acquired traits is a doctrine used to account for the persistence of Christianity in the world and to deny the miraculous in that persistence that we turn to those peoples whose acquired traits through unknown ages have been filth of body, vileness of mind, cruelty in all its forms, until the last stage of human degradation and sin has been reached and men have made human flesh their greatest feast. We will go to the cannibal islands and coasts of the southern Pacific, some unvisited by foreigners till the man with the Bible came, others taught even hitherto unknown vilenesses by visiting foreigners, but all distrustful of every other man and standing with the ever-ready hatchet to prepare another feast of human flesh.

It is now about fifty years since these islands were visited by men who brought the Bible. They came to commend the Bible to these savages. Through what terrors, dangers and sufferings of body and mind these missionaries passed before one of these savages would listen to the story of the Bible, it is not my purpose to rehearse. But from New Zealand and the south to the Fiji, New Hebrides and New Guinea, there are now islands densely inhabited where all forms of savagery have passed away, where prayer to God is heard in every household, where a stranger is far safer at night than in London or New York, where in all forms of life the nakedness of heathenism has been exchanged for clothing and a right mind. And these former cannibals attribute this utter change in themselves and in their fellows, not to the missionary or his arguments, but to the teachings of the Bible brought home to their hearts by a power they could not resist. After years of seeming fruitless work a man read one day before a crowd of these jeering savages the third chapter of John's gospel. He read "God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten son, that whosoever believeth on him should not perish, but have eternal life." A naked giant with spear and bludgeon strode towards him and blurted out, "What is that? Say it again." It was read again and sped as

an arrow to the heart of the questioner, who became a faithful follower in life and in thought of the only begotten Son who died for him ; a single example out of thousands.

But the proof of change does not end here. One of the first things these changed heathen desire and work for is the translation of the whole Bible into their language. Great as are the gifts made in Christian lands for the circulation of the Bible, they are far below the relative value of the gifts to the same purpose by these converted cannibals. One-half, two-thirds of all their property is not an unusual sum for these new believers in the Bible to give for printing and circulating the book that has been to them a well-spring of life. Still even this a man might do and yet, according to the Bible itself, be no more than sounding brass and a tinkling cymbal. This is not the supreme proof that these hereditary cannibals, changed to believers in the statements of the Bible, give of their change. All around them the ocean is dotted with islands filled with cannibals, as fierce and cruel as they themselves once were. They know better than any others what awaits them at these islands where the Bible never has come. A party of heathen were sitting around the fire in a cocoanut grove, and one of these changed men was telling them of the Bible, and of his intention to carry its good news to a neighboring district. The heathen begged him not to go, saying it was madness to think of it ; the water was full of crocodiles, and the bush full of snakes. Are there any people there? he asked. O, yes, they replied, but they are dreadful savages and cannibals, great warriors, and very treacherous. That is enough, said the believer ; wherever there are people, we must go. And so they have gone to the deepest dens of Satan's retreats. They have died by the hatchet, and been eaten. They have died by the fearful fevers of the low coasts, but for everyone who has fallen, two are ready to take his place. These men do not go alone. The women, who but a few years ago were treated as slaves and beasts of burden, go as the wives of these changed men, with courage as high and devotion as constant in life or death as their husbands.

How do such men die? Namuri had lived in a foreign heathen village, where with his wife he had led a pure and humble

life. The heathen priests feared his influence, and one of them sprang upon him, with killing stone and club, and thought he had killed him ; but Namuri partially recovered. When urged to leave that village and seek a safer residence, he replied, " When I see them thirsting for my blood, I just see myself when the missionary first came to my island. I desired to murder him, as they now desire to murder me. Had he stayed away from such danger, I would have remained heathen ; but he came and taught, till, by the grace of God, I was changed to what I am. Now the same God who changed me to this, can change these poor heathen to love and serve Him." A few days more, and the same savage priest gave him a crushing blow, from which he died a few hours after. Among his last words were, " O, Lord Jesus, forgive them, for they know not what they are doing. O, take not away all Thy servants from Tanna. Take not away Thy worship from this dark island. O God, bring all the Tannese to love and follow Jesus."

Great as have been the triumphs of the Bible in these savage islands, they have been due, as the missionaries confess, far more to the zeal of the natives than to any other human means.

Among all the miracles recorded in the Bible, none are greater than this miracle of the resurrection which has been in plain sight of the world these past sixty years. It is one of the nineteenth century proofs of the words of the Bible, " As the Father raiseth the dead and maketh them alive, even so the Son also maketh alive whom he will." " It is the spirit that maketh alive" (John vi. 63 ; II. Cor. iii. 6). " God, being rich in mercy, for his great love wherewith he loved us, even when we were dead through our trespasses, made us alive together with Christ (by grace have ye been saved), and raised us up with him, and made us sit with him in the heavenly places, in Christ Jesus ; that in the ages to come he might show the exceeding riches of his grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus : for by grace have ye been saved through faith : and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God : not of works, that no man shall glory. For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God afore prepared that we should walk in them" (Eph. ii. 4-10). " Of his own will begat he us with the word of truth"

(James i. 18). "Sanctify them in thy truth ; thy word is truth" (John xvi. 17).

I submit that the experience of these formerly savage, now truly Christian islanders, is, as they assert, an unimpeachable proof that the Bible is the Word of God to the human soul which the Holy Spirit uses to restore man to the image of God in purity, holiness, peace and rest. There are innumerable other proofs equally positive. The same proof is found wherever man, convinced of his sin, turns from himself to seek after and find God. Every land now has those who are the living proofs that God by His Word has raised them from the dead and given them life in Christ.

But all these tests and proofs are idle wind to men who will not taste and see that the Bible is the Word of God. The convincing proof is not a philosophical argument, or myriads of converts, or the belief of parents, or the authority of learning, but it is to each one, just what it is to these islanders, a deep conviction of sin and a discovery of life in Christ as promised by God's Word. That was Paul's experience, and that has been the experience of every one who has made proof of the Word of God by trusting all its promises. They know it to be God's Word with a certainty that is unshakable. They feed on its heavenly manna every morning. They drink of the stream of its pleasures. They find Christ everywhere in this Word ; even where they had least expected to behold Him ; and "he that hath seen Christ in the Bible hath seen the Father," and they know that the words the Father gave Christ, Christ gives to them.

If by Higher Criticism is meant the criticism represented by Kuenen, Wellhausen and their party on the Old Testament, and by Pfleiderer, Harnack and their party on the New, and they are the chief representatives of what they call historical criticism, then it is easy to tell what this criticism says about the Bible. They assert that they examine the Bible as they do any other book, to find a theory that accounts for all the facts they see in the Bible. They have reached a theory about the formation of the Old and New Testaments which they explain and defend in large and learned works.

The fundamental principle of their criticism, as defined by

Kuenen, is that the supernatural is excluded from all consideration, the purely natural being sufficient to explain everything. Men who believe in the supernatural, they say, are their opponents. This fundamental principle of course excludes all belief in and all consideration of miracles, which never did occur and which no testimony is sufficient to establish. Of course if there is no supernatural in the world, no miracle, there has been no revelation from God, which would be a miracle, and there can be no foretelling of events and persons far distant in the future. No supernatural, no miracle, no revelation, no prophecies—these are the necessary presuppositions, according to this school, of an unprejudiced study of the Bible. Kuenen on the Old Testament and Pfeiderer on the New assert these facts.

But no supernatural, no miracle, no revelation, no prophecy, rule God not only out of the Bible but out of the world, which seems rather a large assumption by men who profess to be the only cool, unprejudiced investigators and searchers for the truth.

Starting from these few simple and universal propositions, they come out at the end of their learned works just where they began, for these works were written to be the proof of these propositions. These writers cannot claim that they discovered these to them axiomatic truths. Voltaire, Diderot, D'Alembert, Holbach, Helvetius and a host of others in France during all the last century; Frederic II., King of Prussia, 1740–86, the Berlin Academy under him, most of the professors in the German universities, and the majority of German preachers during the last half of the last century, held and taught these fundamental propositions, and they have been held ever since by the majority of theological professors in the German universities. There is no occasion to doubt the diligence, the honesty, the learning of these professors. No one is ever called to a theological professorship in a German university because he is a converted man, or believes the Bible. The one question is, Is he sufficiently learned and can he teach? Pfeiderer, professor of practical theology, and Harnack, professor of Church history, in Berlin, do not believe in the supernatural. Wellhausen, a leader in this criticism of the Old Testament, declares himself a polytheist; Kuenen—whose purpose in life, his sympathetic biographer tells us, was to

strip from Christianity every remnant of supernaturalism, which means that Christ is not God, not born of a virgin, or raised from the dead—Kuenen was professor of theology at Leiden, and secretary of the Society for the Defence of the Christian Religion. So it is no bar to a man's being a Protestant theological professor in Europe that he does not believe in the supernatural.

For twenty-five years the peculiar phase of anti-supernatural criticism which is called in this country "Higher Criticism," has busied itself with discovering in the Old Testament contradictory narratives, statements, dates, and above all and in all a wretched, incomprehensible editing of the whole. The works of Kuenen, Wellhausen, Budde, Cornill and their followers are filled with their proofs of these contradictions. They have discovered no new facts for grammar or interpretation. They have added nothing to the lexicology of Hebrew. They appeal constantly to scientific exegesis, but they have nothing beyond these aforementioned fundamental principles which every intelligent, trained scholar does not possess. Having for twenty-five years followed this criticism in all its works, I can speak for myself and say that I do not see one discrepancy where they see a hundred contradictions, and I turn from their works to the Bible as one turns from a dark Indian temple with its hideous forms of man-made gods among a thousand pillars, to the fair light of the sun in God's temple of the sky.

These writers declare they have proved the historical parts of the Bible to be no history at all. But they have only proved it to those who agree that the supernatural is to be excluded from all consideration. They assert that the early history of the Bible is fable and legend, because man is there represented as having a high ideal of God, and a religious sense that only belongs to later ages. But their fellow professors who teach us of early man as he is shown by his monuments in Egypt and Asia, tell us that the monuments prove over and over again that man as he first appears has a high ideal of God, of morals and an elaborate scheme of religion. Whom shall we believe if we rely only on learned human testimony? This criticism dogmatically states that the Israelites could not write before David, and, therefore, composed no books, kept no records before that time,

B.C. 1000. Egyptology and Assyriology give us the myriad proofs that as soon as man appears on monuments, before B.C. 3000, it is with the hand of a master in all written characters and in power of expression, and that the Semites of whom the Hebrews were a part, from the earliest times held in their trained hands all the great roads of the world's commerce. Three hundred and thirty-six letters have been unearthed, all written before the usual date of the Exodus. They are from kings of Babylon and Mesopotamia, from Egyptian prefects on the Syrian and Palestinian coast to the Pharaohs. They are written in a Semitic tongue, proving that at that early day Semitic was the language of diplomacy and commerce over Western Asia and with Egypt. The Jew has never, except in this criticism, been accounted the dunce of nations.

I have said that every religion testifies that the sore of the heart is sin, and the yearning cry of man everywhere is for salvation from his sin. But there is one spot on earth where you will never hear sin mentioned or salvation spoken of. It is in this criticism. There where the Bible is discussed from Genesis to Revelation by Protestant theological professors, where thousands of pages are crowded with all the marks of human learning, where men grow old in teaching others, there reigns the silence of death over the open sore of the world that brings all its tears, over the deepest woes and most ardent longing of the human soul. Surely there is something wrong with this criticism, when this is its practical result in all its works. That wrong is at its base, in its fundamental principles, which through all the centuries have brought forth the same result.

For one hundred and fifty years the two views of the Bible set forth in this paper have run side by side. Learned men have in great works denied openly, or assumed that there never has been, a revelation from God in words to man ; never a miracle, or prophecy ; that the Bible is only a human book swarming with errors ; that the only religion is morality ; and man knows nothing of a future world. On the other side, men of all conditions, learned and unlearned, rich and poor, have believed that the Bible is God's Word to man, that miracles and prophecy are marks of God in the world ; that true religion is the following

of the God-man, Jesus Christ, in faith, and love, and every grace; that the Holy Spirit uses the Word of God to turn man from sin to Jesus Christ and holiness of life.

Over against the persistent same denial of 150 years is set the fruit of belief, in covering this land with spiritual churches whose annual increase is between 400,000 and 500,000 souls; in missions to the heathen on which the wealth of the churches is poured out, and the annual increase is more in number than all the denying professors and students; in publishing and selling annually millions of copies of the Bible, whose circulation is far greater and more universal than any other book; in tract societies, Sunday-school societies, and all the means of publication by which many millions of pages are annually sent forth and paid for, to recommend the Bible as God's Word to young and old. And these believers in the Bible as God's Word are further confirmed in their belief by seeing the power of God accompany His Word, to raise multitudes from the foul death of sin to the pure life taught by that Word.

The two parties approach the Bible from absolutely opposite and contradictory sides: the one approaches it from the side of the sufficiency of the human intellect to decide all questions raised by the Bible, and from the side of the denial of the supernatural in all earthly affairs. The other approaches the Bible from a deep and absorbing conviction of their sin, and a longing for pardon and peace from God. The one finds in the Bible an utter misunderstanding of every subject treated by it. The other finds pardon and peace with God, and knows with the deepest, surest knowledge possible to man, that God is the author of the Bible, and they reverence and cherish it as the most precious possession in the world.

The Bible is as powerful to-day as it ever has been, to accomplish that which God pleases, and to prosper whereto he sent it, to convince man of his sin, and assure him of salvation. The proof of it is the hundreds of thousands of men, women, children who every year are convinced of their sin, and find the pardon and peace of God through His Word.

HIGHER CRITICISM UNDER REVIEW.

By PROF. E. L. CURTIS, of the Yale Divinity School :

Whenever we speak of the Bible we should speak with reverence and humility. The speaker who preceded me dwelt, in the first part of his paper, upon the wonderful work of our missionaries in the South Sea Islands in proclaiming the truths of the Bible, and he gave to us a very clear and a very true picture of what the Bible as the Word of God in the hand of the ministers of Jesus Christ through their presentation of its precious truths has accomplished, and I am sure that he convinced you here that the Word of God is sure and abiding and self-evidencing, a two-edged sword, bringing home to the conscience and bearing impress upon the life, changing the character of man. So far I heartily agree with Dr. Osgood, and I believe that he has presented to us one of the very strongest arguments that can be presented that the Higher Criticism in no way invalidates the Bible as the Word of God, because the Word of God is that which comes home, testified by the Holy Spirit. to the heart and conscience of man.

But the word "Higher Criticism," which is sneered at, is a word which, whatever may have been its origin, is now currently accepted in this country as defining a certain method of knowledge. Doubtless it was not the best term which might have been chosen. Very likely Eichorn made a mistake when he called the criticism which he used in separating the book of Genesis into its parts the Higher Criticism. It was an unhappy term, but it has passed over into this country and by it we understand a method of the knowledge of literature. When a book is presented you may ask certain questions in regard to it. You may ask whether its ideas are true. You may ask whether its statements of fact are correct. You may ask when and by whom it was written. You may ask after its literary quality, whether it is poetry or prose or fiction. You may also ask

after its text, whether that has been correctly handed down. This is an order of interest. In investigation we would reverse this order and start with the text first, and hence we have various departments of criticism. We have textual criticism. We have literary criticism. We have historical criticism. We have exegetical criticism—criticism that asks after the true meaning of a writer; and we also have philosophical criticism, or criticism which asks after the truth of ideas. Now the Higher Criticism is the term which, by general consent, is applied to literary and historical criticism combined. Textual criticism was called the “Lower Criticism” because it came first—first of all. Then we ask after, when and by whom was a writing written. We ask after the historical probability of its statements. We ask also after its literary character, whether it is prose or poetry or fiction, or what is its general literary style, and our endeavor to answer these questions, which often in the answer may be woven and interlaced together, we call the Higher Criticism. That is the way in which the term is usually understood in this country.

Now, in the first place, we notice that the Higher Criticism has no bearing upon the ideas or their truth. For instance, to give a plain and practical illustration, I may read the story of Joseph and the story of Joseph comes home to me with wonderful power, teaching me that I ought to be true to God under the most adverse circumstances, teaching me also the lesson that God will not leave and desert one who is true to Him, but in the end will reward him. And thus we make the story of Joseph an appropriate subject for a sermon for the lessons which it contains. Now the question in regard to whether I shall be true to God under adverse circumstances or temptation the Higher Criticism has absolutely nothing whatever to do with. But I may take up the story of Joseph and I may read it in another way. I may find certain curious statements in this story. I may find that in one part, in some verses, it speaks of Joseph being sold to the Ishmaelites, and in others to the Midianites. I may find also that the captain in Egypt is Potiphar, the one to whom Joseph is given, and that he is also the one who has command of the prison. I

may find that the story represents the men opening the bag of corn at the inn, and finding the money there, and being surprised and terrified, and that the story represents them also as opening their bags at the household and there, in the presence of their father, being surprised and astonished. I may find that in one part of the story Reuben is the one who takes the leading place as the noble and generous one who would deliver his brother, and in the other part that Judah takes this place. Putting all these things together I am drawing the conclusion that we have in the narrative of Joseph two traditions, two stories, that have come down and have been woven and fitted together in one ; that there have been two general stories current concerning Joseph, and that the writer of the book of Genesis took the two and presented what we now have in our present form of the Book of Genesis. Now work like that is what we understand by Higher Criticism. Now the fact that the story of Joseph might be made out as coming down in this way, formed from two narratives, has absolutely no bearing whatever upon the law of life and the law of conduct as it is written in that story. Dr. Osgood insists that there can be only two camps; that we must either believe that the Bible is absolutely inerrant in all its statements, or else that we must enter the other camp of those that deny the supernatural. I do not want to misrepresent him. Is that the position, Dr. Osgood?

Dr. Osgood: I did not take that position. Inerrancy is a word quite general at the present day.

Professor Curtis: Will you please define your position?

Dr. Osgood: I have got to take the train. Whilst I did not take that position, I should be perfectly willing to do it if it is a necessity; but I did not do it. I only said that the camp was of those who absolutely disbelieved, and of those who believe in the Bible as the Word of God, and between the camps there were a good many compromises.

Professor Curtis: And that in the end we were bound to be separated into two camps, that there would be no middle ground, that those who stood between were bound to perish. That I understood is your position. I do not want to misrepresent you.

Dr. Osgood : Go on, my dear sir, I am glad to hear you.

Professor Curtis: Very well. Now I occupy, I am frank to say, a position between. I am forced to do it. Why? I am forced to do it by a study of this Book. I must interpret this Book plainly and simply in a straightforward, honest way. I must interpret this Book as I interpret language ordinarily. Now I find that there are certain statements in this Book which I cannot explain away. For example, when it says in the Fourth Commandment, "Six days shalt thou labor and do all thy work," etc., I must interpret that language according to its natural meaning. It means six literal days in one case; it means six literal days in the other. The Hebrew language could have said in six periods if that had been the meaning of the writer, but that was the plain, simple and straightforward meaning of language in that position. And also when we say that Adam lived a certain number of years and begot his son Seth, and Seth lived a certain number of years and begot another son, I must take that language just as it stands, because in no other way do I believe that it was understood by those for whom it was written. When it says that at the time when Joseph was sold into Egypt, Judah had his unhappy connection with the Canaanitish woman and the children were born, and then that those children grew up, and they also had children, which is equivalent to Judah's great grandchildren, and that then when we find another list including those great grandchildren among those that went down with Jacob into Egypt, and the time which had elapsed was only at the most nineteen years or about, I say frankly that there must be some discrepancy here. When I read in one case that during the days of Samuel there was complete peace, and that the Philistines came no more into the land, and then when I go on a little further and read that the cry of the children came up to God for a saviour or deliverer from the Philistines, and when I read at the beginning of the reign of Saul that every man had to go down to the Philistine country in order to sharpen his agricultural implements, why then I say that we have the story of two witnesses. Now, when I take up such a work as Livy, for example, the Roman historian, and I find similar discrepancies in

that, I find no one taking pains to deny or explain away the discrepancies. They admit and receive them. Now I say, Why not do it also in respect to the Bible? Why not treat it in a way which seems to me as fair and honest and straightforward?

I contend that the Bible was given for the purpose which was expressed here this afternoon by Dr. McLane, when he presented before you so eloquently and so graphically how the purpose of the Bible is to present a way of redemption from sin. Christ says, "I am come that they may have life, and that they may have it more abundantly." Now that is the purpose of the Bible. It has come that we might have life, and that we might have it more abundantly. It was not given to teach history in a technical way; it was not given to teach science in a technical way, but it was given to teach your heart and my heart, and to lead us into a higher and newer and fuller life. And when it comes through Jesus Christ, presented in that way to the savage, to the man here in the city, or wherever it is proclaimed, it has the one same effect. This critical way of studying the Bible is a way that I really do not like. I do not think much of it. Here is a great painting. I sometimes use this illustration. You stand and look at it, and a man comes along and says, "That painting is wonderful." It may be like the Sistine Madonna. Some, when they sit before that painting, are moved to tears, it is so wonderful. Suppose a man comes and he commences to discuss the painting, the different colors that are used, explains them scientifically. Suppose he goes and points out certain inaccuracies which may be in the painting; tells you that the Madonna is not of Jewish features or cast. Suppose he comes and tells you that very likely a pupil of Raphael drew the first sketch of the painting, and that the great artist only filled in and made the finishing touches of it, as sometimes occurs—probably did not occur in reference to this painting, but has occurred in reference to other paintings by the masters of Europe. Now all of that would have no bearing whatever upon the effect of that painting as a work of art. It would not touch its beauty in any way or shape. It would still be there just as powerful to touch and to move man, as it was before. Well, now, it is the

same with the Bible and the work of the Higher Criticism. Many people think a great deal depends upon whether it was one man or two men who wrote Isaiah. I am simply giving my own experience. It does not make one iota of difference to me in regard to the religious truth as contained. Do you suppose the words, "Let the wicked forsake his way," etc., are any less true whether Isaiah number one or Isaiah number two wrote them? And so it is. Of some things I am certain, and that that Book is the Word of God in a real and living sense to my soul. I am certain of that. The Higher Criticism does not invalidate in any way the Bible as the Word of God.

By PROF. G. FREDERICK WRIGHT, of Oberlin College:

It has seemed to me that the discussion ought to be prolonged somewhat in order to have both parties properly understood. I doubt if Professor Curtis would receive the same impression from the story of Joseph, believing it to be true and believing it to be a fiction, and the question is whether he believes that story to be true; whether there was such a life of Joseph, whether those things did actually happen. And so in regard to most of those Old Testament subjects. They approach them in this way that those who believe strongly in the supernatural are inclined to think that the presumption is that there is some way of harmonizing those accounts, and they look for that harmony on that presumption, whereas it seems to me that a good many others look for where they may possibly make a discrepancy and they seem to think that is the natural thing to do. The most of us are led through our experience of the Bible to believe that there is under it so much truth that we will readily see how the harmony can exist. If you take two good witnesses who contradict one another, there is some way of harmonizing the results, and so in regard to the question of Isaiah. It touches our belief with respect of prophecy, and our belief with respect to the interpretation of what Christ Himself says about these things. It means a good deal if Christ says our sins are to be forgiven; we want to know if those words are

true. They are established to be true of Christ and His miracles and the truthfulness of this record. Are these words of Isaiah the utterance of some man who is giving a vague expression to some impulse of his mind, or has he a solid foundation? So the discussion of this question, whether the history of the Jews is a proper interpretation of human nature, is one that we cannot dispense with. I presume when we came to understand each other's terms that we should be substantially alike.

By PROFESSOR H. G. MITCHELL, of the Boston University:

Mr. Chairman: There are so many things that I should like to say in the few minutes granted me, that I hardly know where to begin or which to select.

I am always hurt when I hear such things as have just been said with reference to certain of our biblical scholars. Those who say them are utterly mistaken. It is very easy to show not only that these honored teachers are not undermining the faith of their pupils, but that it is ridiculous to suspect them of so doing.

I find an illustration of the latter of these two points among my early recollections. When I was a boy, living in a new country, I often saw examples of hasty construction. A man wanted a house, and he wanted it in a hurry. If he waited to dig a cellar with a solid wall, he could not get it enclosed in time to suit his purpose. He therefore planted four strong posts at the proper points, and built his house upon them, and then, perhaps, after the harvest or the winter that was pressing him, at his leisure he supplied it with a more permanent foundation. Now suppose that, in such a case, when the masons began operations, the good woman at her work within, on hearing the noise under her feet, and seeing the earth wheeled into her dooryard, should rush out and forbid further excavation, insisting that the workmen were bringing the house down upon her and her family, what would the workmen naturally reply? They might try to show her that the work must proceed in spite of her fears, but some one would probably say: "Madam, don't you

see that we ourselves are under the house? Does it seem likely that we would pull it down over our own heads?"

The application of this illustration is apparent. The scholars so much abused are Christians. Their God is the God of the Bible, and the salvation in which they rejoice is the theme of that sacred Book. Have they not as much or more at stake than their brethren? Is it reasonable to suppose that they would wantonly overthrow the Bible and thus ruin their own dearest hopes for time and for eternity? The idea is evidently preposterous.

How, then, is the persistent activity of these scholars to be explained? They would say that instead of destroying they were fortifying the Bible, and they could bring proof of this assertion. Sometime ago a good woman complained that she was losing her faith, as the result of a series of sermons on the Bible from the modern standpoint. "Tell her," said a professor in one of our Eastern colleges, who heard of the case, "That but for the Higher Critics and their help in removing difficulties in the Bible, I never should have been saved."

I can appreciate this statement, for I myself have been greatly helped by the new views. I was taught to believe, for example, that the first two chapters of Genesis were a single inspired account of creation; but the time came when I felt obliged to surrender either their unity or their inspiration. My later teachers said: "There are two accounts," and my difficulty was gone. The story of the rape of Sarah is another case in point. Most people find it hard to believe that she could have attracted Abimelech's or even Pharaoh's attention at the age at which she is reported to have been taken from her husband; but if the documentary hypothesis be accepted the difficulty is removed, for it appears that the data from which Sarah's age must be computed came from one source, and these incidents in her life from other documents. Let me add one more illustration. In the story of Hagar we are told that when she found herself without water in the desert of Beersheba she laid her child under a shrub to die, but was bidden to go and take him up again, as if he were yet in arms, and the Greek version of Gen. xxi. 11 says that when Abraham dismissed her he put the child on her shoul-

der, where Oriental women still carry their babies. It is perfectly clear that the author of this story intended to represent Ishmael as very young. If, however, you will study the context, you will find that, according to our present Genesis, he must have been, at least, sixteen years of age. The only way out of the inconsistency is to take refuge in the hypothesis that the book is composite, and I, for one, am grateful that this hypothesis has been proposed. These are but specimens. If I had time, I could cite many more instances in which I have found relief from skepticism by adopting more liberal views of the origin and structure of the Bible. I am satisfied that if such views had earlier become current, many whose faith has been shaken or destroyed by the tirades of such men as Col. Ingersoll might still be in happy relations with the Church.

A Voice : May I ask the Professor how he explains the belief in the inspiration of the Bible?

Professor Mitchell : I am not quite clear as to the meaning of the question, but if I understand him, the questioner feels that the views now generally held by biblical scholars are inconsistent with the doctrine of the inspiration of the Bible. They are inconsistent with that form of the doctrine of inspiration which makes it imply the infallibility of the inspired subject and the consequent inerrancy of the Scriptures, but not with the rational and biblical form of that doctrine. "But," some one will say, "if the Bible is not inerrant, of what use is it?" I have often been asked this question. I always meet it with this illustration: Some time ago, when I was spending my vacation in New Hampshire, I became confused with reference to the points of the compass; so thoroughly confused that I really doubted the identity of the north star. I sent for a compass, hoping that it would help me. It did not help me, for when I consulted it I found that it would not agree either with the statements of my host or the testimony of the heavens. This incident led me to give some attention to the nature of the magnetic needle, when I discovered that not only must allowance be made for the variations of this instrument in different localities, but in the case of mariners' compasses each one must be adjusted to the ship to which it is to belong. Of course, since that time I do not trust the

compass as blindly as I did, but I know that, if properly used, it will always prove itself reliable. The same, it seems to me, is the case with the Bible. There is in it a human and fallible element, but this element is dangerous only to him who refuses to recognize it. I believe that many have made shipwreck of their faith because they had been taught, as are still taught in some of our schools, that a single error in the Bible would destroy its value as Scripture.

Now if you will allow me, I will return to the line of thought that I was following, and tell you what has been the effect of the new view of the Bible upon my students. I think that most of them accept it before they finish their course, and that most of the others do so soon after graduation. I have never known but two to leave our school, because they could not endure the doctrine, and one of them afterwards reconsidered his action. I have never known any one to accept it who did not find it helpful to him, and many of them are touchingly grateful for being made acquainted with it. A few years ago a young man, on whom I feared that my instruction had made no impression, came to me the last day of his first year, and said: "Professor, when we began the study of Genesis, I feared that I was going to lose my faith in the Bible, but after a time my wife suggested that we read the book in the light of the new theory at prayers, and I can't tell you how grateful I am that we were led to make the experiment. It's a new book to us." A few days ago, I found at the end of an examination paper—the last in the course—something like this: "I want to thank you for the good that you have done me, and especially for the light that you have thrown on this book of Isaiah." I had simply interpreted the book as the product of two distinct authors and periods. Experiences of this sort, which are of almost daily occurrence, make it impossible for me to believe that others who teach the views under discussion, are thereby undermining the faith of their pupils.

A Voice: I would like to ask if there is any criterion of inspiration, except that it seems to me that the passage must be inspired?

Professor Mitchell: There are two sources of evidence con-

cerning the reality of inspiration. In the first place, some of the sacred authors testify that they themselves, or others whose deeds or words they record were inspired. In such case, the first question is, What do these authors mean by inspiration? after which a second is in order, viz.: Do the words or deeds recorded substantiate the claim to inspiration? There are, however, large portions of our Scriptures whose authors do not claim to have been supernaturally assisted in their production. In the case of such books, the question is, are the contents of these books of such a character as to require one to assert that their authors must have been inspired to produce them? Let me add that the whole question of inspiration is one of secondary importance. The main question is, Is the Bible, whatever its origin, a sufficient guide to a knowledge of God and His will? If it is, what does it matter by what process it was produced?

By D. S. GREGORY, D.D., LL.D., of New York:

I did not come with any preparation or intention of making a speech. I agree with the last speaker who has spoken, that if the Higher Criticism had been taught over this country a few years sooner, Col. Ingersoll would now have no adversaries, that is, if it had been accepted. I think it would have cleared the track for him, so far as I am able to understand it and its results, and I am inclined to that belief from the observation that I have had of the results of it, or from those with whom I have come especially in contact. Now, there are certain things that I wish Dr. Wright could have presented, as I am sure that I agree with him in his general views on the subject. But let me say just one or two things about this matter of criticism.

In this country the tendency, as Prof. Curtis has said, is to distinguish between the Higher Criticism and the Lower Criticism. The Lower Criticism is the textual criticism. The Higher Criticism, literary criticism, embraces everything except the Lower Criticism, according to the common notion. Now, taking that phrase, Higher Criticism, there is Higher Criticism, and Higher Criticism. When I was in the theological seminary I

was under the instruction of that grand man, Dr. William Henry Green, who, in my estimation, stands at the head of Hebrew scholarship in this country, and is one of the grandest Christian men I ever knew. We had criticism. We did not call it Higher Criticism in those days, but our teacher went over this whole range of German thought and criticism, entered into all the theories and discussed them with our class, and presented the grounds and the conclusions, and we had the benefit of his wise thought upon them. He met all these points that are being made still. There was another way of explaining them.

But I say there is this kind of criticism which is biblical criticism in its proper form. We call it, perhaps, *historico-grammatical* or *grammatico-historical*. It is criticism which takes the Bible with grammar and history, and seeks to get at the meaning of it. It begins reverently, accepting the great mass of evidences with which you come to the Bible, the evidences of Christianity which are sufficient with the average man to predispose him to at least a friendly reception of the Bible as it is presented to him. There is this kind of criticism which has had grand results, but there is another kind of criticism, and that is the *Rationalistic Higher Criticism*. Now, I am in favor of the Higher Criticism which I call *Rational Higher Criticism*, but I have no patience with the Higher Criticism which I call *Rationalistic Higher Criticism*—the Higher Criticism that assumes that there is nothing supernatural in the Bible, or if there be a supernatural in the Bible you must leave it out in your study of the Bible. Now, no Christian who has accepted the evidences of Christianity, who has given any adequate thought or study to the subject of the evidences, can come to the Bible and say, I am going to ignore all that is supernatural in it, and I am going to take what I find left after that.

When a man takes the Bible in that way and starts out with Genesis, he reads: "In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth." That is supernatural. Leave that out. So he goes on down through and he will find by the time he gets to the end he has left out pretty much everything—lost it on the ground that it is supernatural. It involves God, it involves miracles, it involves prophecy, it involves something that

is supernatural, that rests on the supernatural. This Rationalistic Higher Criticism, which assumes that we can take the Word of God and take it without any reference to the great range of Christian evidences and deal with it just as you would deal with Robinson Crusoe, I do not expect any high results from. There have been grand scholars in Germany who have taken that other view. They assume in the Pentateuch, when they come upon two things that can possibly be tortured into contradictions that they are difficulties, and they set to work to see if those difficulties can be reconciled, and they succeed in reconciling them, I think; at least they succeed to the satisfaction of many of the ablest men that I know, and the ablest thinkers in reconciling all these contradictions, or apparent contradictions.

Just as in the New Testament, you can start out in the Gospels and say, Here Matthew differs from Luke so and so. Here's a difficulty, contradiction, discrepancy, and that very soon passes into a contradiction. You say, Either this one told the truth or this one did. Here's this genealogy in Matthew: If that is correct, that one in Luke is not correct. There is a perfectly simple way of reconciling the two. There are two different genealogies, as every one has. If you take the rational way and study the rationalistic way, it is a very easy matter to reconcile them. Just so in the Pentateuch. The connection of the first chapter and the paragraph up to the fourth verse in the second chapter is all very plain to Prof. Wright, and very plain to me and Dr. Green, and hundreds of men whom I know, men who have been able to look into the subject and who have looked into it with as much scientific acumen and patience as any men who have reached the other conclusion. Now, I say, on the basis of the evidences of Christianity in favor of the Bible, the attitude of the Christian Church and the Christian man should always be that this Bible is proved by these evidences to be the Word of God. The presumption is against contradiction. It is against error, until error is absolutely proved, and the great objection that I have to all the adverse criticism of the New Testament and to the adverse criticism of the Old Testament is, that they exalt simple difficulties into the place of absolute contradictions. There are myriads of difficulties in the work of creation which

the scientists have never understood as yet, but they do not pretend to say that these are contrary to law. They are trying to find what the law is under which they all come. And I believe that there is a great divine law running through the Bible by which all these discrepancies are being reconciled.

By W. W. McLANE, D.D., Ph.D., New Haven, Conn.:

I suppose that the sympathy of this meeting is probably very generally with the position of the gentleman who wrote the paper. I happen to be a preacher and not a professor. I don't personally like much of the Higher Criticism, because it is not the method of study which fits a man particularly for preaching. I find that I must read the story of Joseph, not to find out whether it is one story or two traditions woven in one story, but to find, as Prof. Curtis has said, what it teaches in regard to loyalty to God and God's care of man. I must study the Bible in that way or I do not help the people in preaching.

Q. Do you find that you can study it the other way and keep your faith in it?

A. My friend, Professor Curtis here, is a teacher. He is a good preacher, I have no doubt; but he is a teacher. He is obliged to teach the literature of the Old Testament and he arrives at certain conclusions. I want to call the attention of the audience to one thing which I do not think many people think of. Many people confound revelation and inspiration, and do not distinguish between the revelation of a truth to the mind of man by the Spirit of God, and the mere presence of the Spirit of God which may direct men in the writing of historical facts. You must distinguish between revelation and inspiration. I arose, however, because one gentleman back here referred to the injurious effect of the teaching of the age. I am not proposing to stand here to say what may have been the effect, one way or another, of all the teaching that may have been connected with the University. I do not know how far the influence of Prof. Harper may go one way or the other. Prof. Curtis came from a Seminary where he has done good work. He is now teaching

in Yale Divinity School, and when his students come into my prayer meeting, holding some of these positions which I know he holds, and manifest themselves to be profoundly full of faith in the Bible and full of loyalty to Jesus Christ, I must recognize that fact. When one of his students said to me, "The influence of Prof. Curtis is especially spiritual and helpful to the students," and when I can testify to the fact that when he appears before us ministers, to read a paper to us, or anything of that kind, I can speak not for myself, but for them also, to say that he makes the same impression; we must recognize that fact, and I think it is due to such men as Prof. Curtis and Prof. Mitchell, to recognize that they stand as Christian men who have a personal interest in this matter, and who are not antagonizing Christianity, but are honestly seeking after truth. And we must be careful in our remarks not to affirm that they are doing detriment where they are not. And that is the reason I made this remark to say that so far as Prof. Curtis's influence in the Seminary of Yale is concerned, I know it is on the side of the Bible, faith in the Bible and in Christ.

CHRIST AT THE BAR OF THE HIGHER CRITICISM.

[Prepared for the Summer School of the American Institute of Christian Philosophy, July, 1893.]

BY DAVID JAS. BURRELL, D.D.,

Pastor of the Marble Collegiate Church, of New York.

[The writer of this paper is well aware that it is liable to misconstruction. He believes, however, that the false methods of the Higher Criticism are so pernicious in their results as to warrant a bold attempt at *reductio ad absurdum*. It would appear that this can be best accomplished by a frank and fair application of those rules to the doctrine of the Incarnate Word. If this shall seem irreverent, let the blame be laid where it belongs.]

IN this year of our Lord, 1918, all followers of Christ have reason to congratulate themselves on the prevailing freedom of thought and discussion. It is scarcely believable that only twenty-five years ago the friends of the Higher Criticism were under reproach by reason of their courageous opposition to narrow and antiquated views of Inspiration. At that time it was as much as a minister's good and regular standing was worth to breathe a word against inerrancy. But truth, as ever, gained the upper hand. Inerrancy, riddled by the running fire of honest scholarship, died the death; and the Bible was reduced to its proper place as a doctrinal and ethical thesaurus, a venerable landmark of literature, an indispensable Book among books. Toward the consummation of that desirable end the friends of progress were enabled to help themselves greatly by insisting that Christ and not the Bible must be kept upon the throne. The word "Christo-centric" was made to answer a most useful purpose. The vice of bibliolatry ceased and the heart of the Church was centred on Jesus Christ. But words are like wearing apparel; they serve their time; and afterwards are better honored in the breach than in the observance. Thus the word "Christo-centric" has served its day. The Written Word having now been adjusted to its proper place, it has seemed only meet and proper that scholarship should turn its attention toward

the Incarnate Word. It is for these reasons and under such conditions that we find ourselves in the midst of a Christological controversy. The question of the Inerrancy of the Scriptures has given way to the allied and complementary question of the Perfection of Christ. Bibliolatry has indeed ceased, but we are confronted by a more serious danger—to wit, Christolatry. Let us be free and frank in approaching the problem. Thank God the time has gone by when a man could be branded as a heretic for departing from traditionalism or falling out with an historic creed. We are coming to perceive more and more that religion is a life and not a theology. The question of the hour centres in Jesus who is called the Christ. What think ye of Him? The Son of God He doubtless was; but in what peculiar sense are we to understand that term? For there are many sons of God. A sublime Figure among men He doubtless was; but whether or no He was absolutely free from those ills which humanity is heir to is a matter which only the most rigid and courageous scrutiny can determine. And this is the question before us.

I. As to our attitude. The same broad and helpful rules of criticism must be observed in these premises that served so well the purpose of the Higher Critics in their controversy respecting the Written Word.

First, and foremost, we must cherish no prejudgments. It is obvious that if we begin by assuming that Christ was "very God of very God," or that He was in anywise unique among men, we beg the question at the outset and make argument impossible. This mode of procedure would be wholly averse to the critical spirit. If we are to discuss this question at all we must divest ourselves of former convictions, hold judgment in equilibrium, and insist that Jesus shall submit to the same critical tests that would be applied in the case of Homer, Sesostris or Sakya-muni. If I have entertained a sentimental regard for Him as an incomparable Friend, infallible Guide, and divine Redeemer, that must needs be laid aside for the purpose in hand. The only honest critic is brother to the juror that never saw the prisoner, never read the newspaper, nor in anywise formed an opinion respecting the case. For how can a man make up his mind if his mind is already made up? Therefore one who has called him-

self a Christian must doff his Christianity for the nonce and hold himself open to conviction either way. If it be asked, when may he resume? we answer, As soon as the case is passed upon. And if it be suggested that the case may hold fire for a lifetime, we answer, *Veritas contra mundum!* No matter what happens, we dare not falter in our search for truth.

Second, we must proceed by induction exclusively. This is now conceded on all hands to be the scientific method. *A priori* reasoning is obsolete. It may indeed be necessary in courts of justice, as jurists contend, but never in the province of spiritual things. Here facts alone must tell their story. By facts we understand such visible and tangible phenomena as lead to incontrovertible conclusions. There must be no "In the nature of the case," no "Thus saith the Lord, and therefore." The time for reasoning from either authority or general principles has passed by. There must be no reference to the consensus, nor to traditional belief, nor yet to "The Law and the Testimony." At one time the Scriptures were regarded as the Court of Last Appeal in spiritual questions; but since their inerrancy has been disposed of they must obviously be classed with other documentary evidence. Their credibility at any point must be passed upon before we can receive it. It is scarcely necessary to say that proof-texts, so called, are not admissible. Faith, as such, is ruled out. With "things not seen" we have nothing to do. Facts must be forthcoming. Nothing but cold facts—"that which we have seen and handled"—will meet the demands of the scientific method. What we require is a calm analysis of the contents of the Gospel. We must take Christ as we find Him. The Incarnation, the Atonement and the Resurrection of Jesus must be frankly and dispassionately surveyed. Love, devotion and kindred sentiments must not be allowed in any wise to prejudice the controversy. If the critic would arrive at the truth respecting the virtues of the blood of Jesus, he must take his position under the cross with those who "stood beholding," must subject that blood to the analysis which is usual in similar cases and must be guided to his conclusions by a rigid calculation as to serum, coagulum, iron and phosphorus. It must ever be remembered that the heart has no lot nor portion in a judicial pro-

cedure. Tears blind the eyes in any administration of justice. *Judicis est semper in causis verum sequi.* As King Richard said when called upon to sit in judgment on his nephew Bolingbroke, so must we say of Jesus,

Now by my sceptre's awe I make a vow ;
His neighbor nearness to our sacred blo^d 'd
Shall nothing privilege him, nor partialize
The unstooping firmness of my upright soul.

II. Thus far as to our attitude; now with respect to the mode of procedure.

The first thing to be done is to arrive at the best possible portrait of Christ. And here we shall find ourselves confronted by many difficulties. The four accounts of Jesus, to begin with, are variously divergent and contradictory. To enter into particulars would lead us far beyond the prescribed limits of this paper. Suffice it to say that Matthew dwells upon the Messianic character of Jesus and His descent from Abraham and David. He offers us a kingly picture. In Mark we have a very different presentation; we look in vain here for royal characteristics. Jesus is a servant, coming not to be ministered unto but to minister, and as such His genealogy is a matter of little or no moment; therefore, none is given. In Luke we have yet another and wholly distinct silhouette. Here the lineage of Jesus is traced not to Abraham but to the mythical Father of the race. The conception is distinctly human; He is the Son of Man. In John we have still another view. As the last of the four biographers of Jesus he outdoes his predecessors in ascribing glory to Him as the eternal, uncreated Word of God. His genealogical table goes back to the remote ages of eternity. He puts a severe strain upon human language in his effort to represent Jesus as every way co-equal with the Father; calling Him the Light of the World; the Way, the Truth and the Life; and identifying Him with the ineffable I AM. A further examination of these four accounts of Jesus would show them to be discrepant at many points. For centuries the ingenuity of an alleged scholarship, now happily extinct, sought vainly to reconcile them. From the song of the angels to the *titulum* on the cross there are disagreements without number. It will be seen,

therefore, that the effort to combine these biographies into a consistent portrait of Jesus is not without difficulty. But as in the previous controversy the preliminary step to the higher criticism of the Scriptures was the determination of a fairly accurate text, so, if we are to arrive at the truth respecting Jesus we must at the outset secure the best possible portrait of Him.

Then we are ready for our next step, namely, to weigh and estimate the contents or phenomena of this portrait, which brings us into the distinctive province of the Higher Criticism. And the fairness of our conclusions will still depend upon our proceeding without warp or bias.

At this point we shall doubtless find so many incongruities in the commonly accepted view as to force upon us a reconstruction of the doctrine of Christ. Here again, by reason of the limitations of this paper we must content ourselves with mere generalizations. It is not a pleasant task to point out imperfections in Christ. Nevertheless "historical criticism finds them and we must meet the issue," whether they destroy the traditional immaculateness of the Saviour or not. It has been taught by some theologians that one verified imperfection destroys His divineness; this claim, however, is a "ghost of modern evangelicalism to frighten children." "And indeed were we to abandon the whole field of supernaturalism so far as the circumstantialia of the character of Jesus are concerned and limit His divineness to the essential contents of His life and character, we would still have ample room to seek divine authority where alone it is important, in the teaching that guides our devotions, our thinking and our conduct."

The frequent errors in the scientific allusions of Jesus are such as to make it quite certain—to put it as mildly as possible—that He was totally unacquainted with science. It is with the utmost difficulty and only by a severe strain of the imagination that His references to man and nature, the processes of natural law and the destiny of material things can be reconciled with such fundamental principles as evolution, natural selection, reversion to type and the conservation of force. In even so small a matter as the germination of a corn of wheat his statements are as contrary to fact as—to use a familiar parallel—were the

preposterous allegations of the author of *Leviticus* with respect to the coney.

Nor do the doctrinal and ethical teachings of Jesus present any better showing. As to doctrine He gives us, indeed, almost nothing in systematic form; His allusions to sin, redemption, regeneration, retributive justice, and the restitution of all things being so brief, fragmentary and incongruous as to render it quite impossible for even His most devoted adherents to arrive at any consensus of belief. His averments respecting a set day of judgment and a local heaven and hell with such material adjuncts as fire and brimstone must stagger the faith of the most credulous.

In the province of ethics, attention is directed to His injunctions respecting filial love (*Matt.* viii. 22); divorce (*Matt.* v. 32); indiscriminate charity (*Matt.* v. 42); and many other principles of the moral law. The woes pronounced upon His enemies have in them all the malignity of the imprecatory Psalms. His announcement of the Golden Rule as an original maxim can scarcely be regarded as otherwise than disingenuous, and in His interview with certain disciples on the way to Emmaus as elsewhere, He appears to have lent Himself to deliberate deceit. And how shall we explain away such hyperbole as that respecting the rich man's salvation or the faith that removes mountains? The list might be prolonged indefinitely.

The same is true of the prophetic utterances of Jesus. All efforts to find any historical correspondence with His predictions respecting the destruction of Jerusalem have been lamentable failures. The great body of Christ's prophecies "have not only never been fulfilled, but cannot be fulfilled because the time has passed forever."

Nor can accuracy be ascribed to His scriptural references. He used the Septuagint Version, which no scholar would have done. Had He been familiar with the real facts as developed in subsequent research He surely would not have referred to Moses as the author of the Pentateuch or to Isaiah as the writer of the latter portion of the prophecy bearing his name. Indeed there is nowhere a hint or suggestion of any sort that betrays any acquaintance whatsoever on His part with even the simplest facts of the Higher Criticism. He indubitably sanctioned the story of

the deluge, the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah by fire from heaven, the changing of Lot's wife into a pillar of salt, and Jonah in the whale's belly. If He knew that these were fables, why did He lend Himself to their furtherance? If he did not know, how could He offer Himself as an inerrant guide in matters of truth?

An examination of the miracles of Jesus would lead to similar conclusions. The most, if not all, of these miracles have been accounted for upon common principles of natural law; yet there is no denying that He encouraged the popular tendency to regard them as weird and unearthly, nay, further, that He rashly ventured His Messianic claims upon their supernaturalness. It is needless to extend these illustrations. As we have already said, it is not a pleasant task to point out the faults of Jesus. We have not taken out a brief to prove His imperfection. "Conservative men should hesitate before they force the critics in self-defence to make a catalogue" of the defects in His life and character.

WHAT ARE THE CONCLUSIONS?

(1) There is no solid basis for the doctrine of an absolutely perfect Christ. As the inerrant Scriptures disappeared before the clear light of scholarship, so does the kindred fable of the immaculate Christ vanish under similar conditions like a fog-bank before the rising sun.

(2) If it be alleged that the imperfections ascribed to the character of Jesus are due to His biographers or to fallible copyists, we answer we have to deal with Christ as we have Him. As to an original Christ, flawless and without guile, the suggestion is merely hypothetical. No living man has ever seen Him. There is no portrait of Him in existence. All current accounts of Him, scriptural and otherwise, agree with the foregoing representation of Him.

(3) If it be alleged that the original Christ must be received by faith, on the assumption that God would not reveal Himself in an imperfect Christ, we answer again that faith has no place in a judicial investigation; and all such *a priori* considerations are foreign to the scientific method. When it was claimed in the former controversy that the original autograph of the Scriptures was inerrant, for the reason that inspiration is a divine breathing

and God could not breathe a lie, the fallacy of such reasoning was instantly apparent. And by the same token, perfection cannot on similar *a priori* grounds be ascribed to Jesus as the Incarnate Word of God.

(4) While disavowing the divine perfection of Jesus we are prepared to insist that all the essentials of such perfection were in Him. He was not God, but contained Him. He was not truth, but contained it. He was not the Incarnate Word, but contained it. His character was to perfection as quartz is to gold. The open question is purely quantitative, whether (so to speak) the quartz contains the gold in paying quantities or not.

(5) The admixture of imperfection in the character of Jesus is what should be expected in the nature of the case. Though begotten by the Holy Ghost He was born of a woman and must needs inherit her human frailty. In like manner the errors of Scripture were traced to the personal infirmities of those holy men who wrote as they were moved by the Holy Ghost. The parallel is exact. The co-operation of the divine with the human never yet resulted in an infelicitous product. The faults of the Incarnate Word are, therefore, after the precise analogy of those in the Written Word of God.

(6) We have no occasion nor necessity for an immaculate Christ. Every purpose is answered by the imposing figure of One who, while pre-eminent in wisdom and goodness, shared the infirmities of His fellow-men. We gain nothing by conjuring up an impossible and unbelievable Avatar. What we want is a working basis and we find it in the doctrine of the historical Christ, the Christ who is set forth in the errant Scriptures and the equally errant lives of Christian people, that is the errant Christ. If, in arriving at this result, we seem to have lost some of our traditional beliefs, we find abundant compensation in the sense of having followed a reasonable course of argument to its inevitable conclusions. The fearless seeker after truth must not shrink from the consequences of his temerity. And it must ever be remembered that nothing in the universe is to be valued with truth. This is the pearl of great price. Thrice happy is he who parts with everything that he may buy it.

It would, however, be a grievous mistake to suppose that

in stripping away the vain traditions that have gathered about Christ we have parted with Christ Himself. Is a tree destroyed by wise pruning? Did we lose the Scriptures when we proved them to be full of inaccuracies? Were they not rather the more endeared to us? So, now that we perceive Christ in His true character, we love and revere Him a thousand-fold more than ever. If any of His people are devoted to Him, we more. A judicious attachment is ever more loyal than a whimsical and ill-grounded infatuation. Our Christ, stripped of the gaudy tinsel with which superstition had decked Him, remains to us the wisest of teachers, the most kindly of philanthropists, the most infallible of guides, the most perfect flower of humanity, and the best Incarnation of Deity that is possible to our fallen race. "That mightiest heart that ever beat, stirred by the Spirit of God, how it wrought in His bosom."* We accept Him as Redeemer and Friend. We recognize His unspeakable goodness in giving Himself for us. None shall exceed us in devotion to Him; none shall sing more loudly or joyously in His honor. He is the foundation of our faith and the corner-top-stone of our life and character. "He remains the highest model of religion within the reach of our thought and no perfect piety is possible without His presence in the heart."† "Whatever may be the surprises of the future, Jesus will never be surpassed. His worship will grow young without ceasing; His story will call forth tears without end, His suffering will melt the noblest hearts; all ages will proclaim that among the sons of men there is none born greater than Jesus."‡

* Theodore Parker.

† David Strauss.

‡ Ernest Renan.

AUGUSTE COMTE AND POSITIVISM.

[Read at the monthly meeting of the American
Institute of Christian Philosophy, May, 1893.]

BY DAVID H. GREER, D.D., OF NEW YORK.

THERE is perhaps no man of eminence in modern times concerning whom there is such diversity of opinion as Auguste Comte. While a few ardent admirers are inclined to give him almost unbounded homage and to regard him as the greatest, or one of the greatest thinkers living or dead, there are others who speak of him as having been crazed with some constitutional disorder or "maniacal disease," and who treat him with a slight bordering upon pity or contempt. Each of these appraisements is partial and one-sided, although it is not difficult to see how each of them should have been made or how the second should be the more common of the two.

Comte's career had two sides to it or rather two stages in it—that of the philosophic thinker and that of the religious reformer. It is in connection with this latter office that those eccentricities appear which have made him obnoxious to such a large number of persons, and yet with that mistaken estimate of his services which is not uncommon to men who are endowed with great capacity and afflicted with great conceit, it is those very eccentricities which he himself has emphasized as the most important features of his life-work and thrust the most conspicuously upon the public notice. It is not surprising, therefore, that men are inclined to forget the great genius of Comte the philosopher, in remembering the colossal vanity of Comte the high-priest of Humanity. And yet despite these drawbacks he is, as Dr. Martineau remarks, "a large and potent factor in modern speculation and thought. A few vigorous minds have been moulded by him to an extent unknown perhaps even to themselves, and many more owe no slight obligation to the pregnant hints scat-

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